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VERSES

EDWARD MACDOWELL



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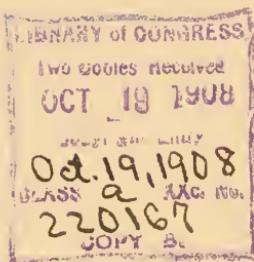
VERSES
BY
EDWARD MACDOWELL



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A Reflection.

What seëst thou in those eyes inscrutable,
O hero of immortality!
Is't thy very self?
Or some star-torn remnant of the serpent's wit
That once the world o'erthrew?
And 'long the line of swerving will
Canst trace thy shrinking soul?
Or is't some demon curse of old
That thralls the mirror's word?

Sunset.

Sleepily, drowsily
Murmurs the forest,
The West shuts its gates
Of burnished gold.
The sun draws its coverlet
(Crimson and sheen)
Up to his eyes,
Now — cannot be seen.
Gone is the day,
Of the sun not a ray:
Cool silver and green
Now reign supreme.
Day's murmur is dead.
All nature's abed,
Save the moon's gentle face
Through the gaunt pines we trace.

Moonlight.

The house is dead:
And through black shadows
Creep long wan fingers white,
That trembling, point the windows out,
And the night wind sighs, "long dead."

Tryst.

Mid daisies and pansies,
Wild roses and rue,
In a garden of fancies
Dappled with dew,
Where a brown swirling brook
Speeds singing "she's true"
Here wait I, my love
For you.

From the North.

Frozen the ground,
The stream ice-bound,
Softly the North wind croons:
Drowsily, sleepily,
The snow doth fall,
As the frost king carves his runes.

After the snow,
From Thor's hammer, a blow,
Will make the sky blaze with light.
Walhalla's flaming,
Waxing and waning,
Will gleam through the dark blue night.

Slumber Song.

Dearest, sleep sound,
The stream's ice-bound,
Softly the North wind moans:
Drowsily, silently,
Falls the snow
O'er the dark pine cones.

Misty dreamland's
Moonlit strand
Awaits my darling's coming:
Ah! Saint Olaf,
Guard him well,
Through the magic gloaming.

Through fields of sleep,
In silence deep,
Slips the laggard guest:
The pine logs smoulder,
As soft on my shoulder,
A flaxen head sinks to rest.

Indian Melody.

Autumn went wooing,
When Summer was gone,
The maple tree blushed
And the lover was won.
But Winter the thief
Stole all the fine scarlet,
And Autumn the jilted
Fled away, Ah! the varlet.

Three Fire Songs.

I.

O thistle-leafed flame,
O vine that twineth round the world
And killest with thy caress,
Thy kiss crumbles all to air
Except perchance a metal rare
That makes the better part of man.
For after the fierce fire of life is done,
It sinks through the world undimmed,
And love remains immortal.

Three Fire Songs.

II.

In flaming gold thou goest,
And crimson in thy hair,
That slips its snood full wilfully
To dance to every air.

Ah well do I remind me,
Thou slender maiden fair,
Of scarlet lips that mock,
Of flashing eyes that dare!

For lo! my heart is ashes,
The light that flickers there
Creeps o'er my lost love's footsteps
And dies in black despair.

Three Fire Songs.

III.

Around a twisted snake of flame,
That from the tangle-carven rock,
Leaps towards its purer sisters,
The stars of Persian night,
The priests of Zoroaster stand
White robed, yet crimson stained,
The snow of eternal purity
Mocked by writhing fire.

And lo! their chant throbs onward,
A straight line midst the dancing shadows,
“Through Death to Life eternal,
Through Fire to God.”
Yet still the flame doth waver —
And flings sardonic glances
O'er the priests pale faces,
And spurning the tangle-cavern rock
Leaps towards its purer sisters,
The stars of Persian night.

A Surf Song.

Seething, receding,
Whirlingly breathing,
The cliffs in misty clouds wreathing,
The mighty sea giant,
Proudly defiant,
In sinister strength reliant,
Swirls fiercely sweeping
Amid the rocks weeping,
Now back to his lair swiftly creeping.

Ah, happy the maiden
Whose heart is not laden
With woe for one on the ocean.
The braver the soul,
The dearer the toll
To the hungry maw of the troll.
Seething, receding,
Whirlingly breathing,
Forever his victims stealing.

At Sunset.

When at last the mountain climbed
The sun begins to set,
The gold we seek is in the sky,
Life's goal before us yet.

Lo! the shrouded valley-land
In mist is lost to sight:
What boots the world beneath our feet,
The soul flies towards the light.

The Cossack.

In the moonlight, near the forest,
Where the river's sighing,
Moaning lies a brave young trooper,
On the greensward dying.

“ Death is mowing in this meadow,
Hark! his scythe’s swift sighing.
Mother, hear me ere the reaper
Spies out where I’m lying.

Sing the songs I loved in childhood,
Cease thy bitter mourning,
Soft to sleep thy voice will lull me
As the day is dawning.

No black cowl shall mar my journey
Towards eternal morning:
Cossacks brave shall chant my death song,
See! the day is dawning!”

— *From the Polish.*

Songs from the Thirteenth Century.

I.

'Neath the lindens,
In the meadow,
Seek I flowers sweet.
Clover fragrant,
Tender grasses,
Bend beneath my feet.
See the gloaming
Softly sinking,
Covers hill and dale.
Hush, my lover,
Tándaréj!
Sweet sings the nightingale.

— *After Walther von der Vogelweide.*

Songs from the Thirteenth Century.

II.

The lovely flowers and verdure sweet
That gentle May doth slip,
Have been imprisoned cruelly
In winter's iron grip.
But May smiles o'er the green clad fields,
That seemed anon so sad,
And all the world is glad.

No joy to me the Summer brings
With all its bright long days;
My thoughts are of a maiden fair
Who mocks my pleading gaze.
She passes me in haughty mood,
Denies me aught but scorn,
And makes my life forlorn.

Yet should I turn my love from her,
For ay my love were gone,
I'd gladly die, could I forget
The love that haunts my song.
So lonely, joyless live I on,
For love my prayer denies,
And childlike mocks my sighs.

— *After Conratin von Hohenstaufen.*

Songs from the Thirteenth Century.

III.

Winter wraps his grimdest spell
O'er my mournful measure,
And the sun with warm caress
Ne'er brings me Summer pleasure.

What care I for Summer sun,
Why welcome Winter's dying?
When the frost that's in Her eyes
Melts not, but mocks my sighing.

And so I sing my saddest song
To touch her heart unyielding,
Though the scorn that's in her eyes
Melts not, but flouts my pleading.

— *After Nithart.*

Songs from the Thirteenth Century.

IV.

As the gloaming shadows creep
Through the forest deep,
Fra Nightingale sings sweet,
Sings sweet through the forest deep.

As through the trees the moonbeams sweep,
Lo! a maid with eager feet,
Seeks in vain her love to greet.
Ah sweet! why moan and weep?

For ay! the gloaming shadows creep
And hearts will cease to beat;
Still Fra Nightingale sings sweet,
Sings sweet when love is deep!

— *After Frauenlob.*

In the Woods.

I.

Through woodland glades
One springtide fair,
I wandered idly
With ne'er a care.

I stooped to pluck
A tiny flower,
When lo! it sighed
From out its bower.

“ Why break my life
An idle hour?
To fade and waste
My woodland dower.”

Then to my heart
I took the flower,
With tender hand
And love’s soft power.

And there it blooms
Forever fair,
For love is ours,
With ne'er a care.

— *After Goethe.*

Siesta.

II.

Under the verdure's
Fragrance rare,
Midsummer extasy
Throbs in the air,
Drowsy and sweet
As a lullabye fair.

— *After Goethe.*

To the Moonlight.

III.

Streaming over hill and dale
Hail! O pallid rays;
Again thou free'st my weary soul
From the dross of days.

What by men was ne'er beknown,
Comes with thy mystic light,
And through the soul's deep labyrinth,
Wanders in the night.

— *After Goethe.*

The Bluebell.

IV.

An azure bluebell
All daintily sweet,
Had early blossomed
The Springtime to greet.

A bumble-bee came
And kissed her soft cheek;
Ah surely they're lovers
Who each other seek.

— *After Goethe.*

From a Fisherman's Hut.

I.

We sat in a fisherman's hut
And looked out o'er the sea.
The evening mists rose slowly
And crept in towards the lea.

Afar on the beacon tower
The lights began to show,
While on the dim horizon
A ship was sailing low.

We talked of distant lands,
Of northern, southern climes,
Of strange and wondrous peoples,
And lore of other times.

* * * * * * *

The maidens were lost in thought,
And our talk waned with the light.
The lonely ship had vanished,
Lost in the somber night.

— *After Heine.*

Scotch Poem.

II.

Far on Scotland's craggy shore
An old grey castle stands,
Braving the fierce North Sea;
And from the rugged casement
There peers a lovely face,
A woman's, white with woe.
She sweeps the harp strings sadly,
And sings a mournful strain;
The wind plays through her tresses,
And carries the song amain.

— *After Heine.*

From Long Ago.

III.

My child, once we were children,
Two children small and gay;
We'd creep between the chicken coops
And hide beneath the hay.

Our neighbor's grey old tabby
Came often to our door;
We made her bows and courtseys,
And compliments galore.

* * * * *

All past are now the children's plays;
The days without a sigh,
The world with all its cares and woes,
And love and life roll by.

— *After Heine.*

The Post-Wagon.

IV.

We journeyed on in the darkness
By post-wagon through the night.
We sat together, and merrily
Laughed and talked until light,

And when the morning dawned,
Amazed were we to find
That 'twixt us sat Amor,
The boy we thought so blind.

— *After Heine.*

The Shepherd Boy.

V.

The shepherd boy a kingdom rules;
An emerald hill his throne;
Crown'd with golden sunshine,
He reigneth there alone.

His goats, court-players are;
Each wears a tinkling bell,
And the bird's sweet pipings,
A royal concert tell,

And the piping and the bells,
With the brook's soft rhymes,
Lull the drowsy king to sleep,
While gently nod the pines.

— *After Heine.*

Monologue.

VI.

Death is the cool blue night,
Life the burning day;
And through the waning light,
To sleep I wend my way.

And o'er my bed there spreads a tree
Where sings a nightingale to me;
Of love and ever love she sings,
And thrills my dream with ecstasy.

— *After Heine.*

Dance of Gnomes.

From the shadow through the moonlight,
In the forest's deepest glades,
Dainty dances often have we
In the midnight's balmy shades.

Flower fairies, proud, frail mockers
Call us ugly hairy imps.
Could we snare ye in our circle
Where your magic halts and limps,

Then gay flaunters would we teach ye
How all true love conquers kind.
Our long beards and "ugly noddles"
Would be lovely to your mind.

Ha! laugh on, ye wilful hussies,
Play your pranks on other guys,
While the moonbeams light our gambols,
Can we live without your eyes.

The Robin.

The robin sings in the apple tree,
The blackbird swings on the thorn,
The day grows old and silence falls,
Leaving my heart forlorn.

Night brings rest to many a soul,
Yet mine is dark with woe;
Can I forget the days gone by
When my love I whispered low?

O robin, and thou blackbird brave,
My songs of love have died;
How can you sing as in byegone days,
When she was at my side.

Midsummer.

Silver clouds are lightly sailing,
Through the drowsy, trembling air,
And the golden, summer sunshine
Casts a glory everywhere.

Softly sigh and sob the billows
As they dream in shadows sweet,
And the swaying reeds and rushes
Kiss the mirror at their feet.

— *After Goethe.*

To Maud.

The west wind croons in the cedar trees,
The golden-rod nods by the lea,
And Maud, there's love in your bonny black eyes,
Can it be meant for me?

The west wind dies in the cedar trees,
The golden-rod droops by the lea,
And Maud, there's scorn in your merry black eyes,
Surely not meant for me?

The east wind moans in the cedar trees,
The golden-rod's dead by the lea,
And Maud, you may glance with your cruel black eyes,
Winter has come to me.

Flute Idyl.

In the woods at eve I wandered,
Through the sunset's crimson light,
There sat Damon playing softly,
Fluting sweet for my delight.
So, la la, la lalla.

And he swore he loved me truly,
Begged me would I love him too,
And bewitched me with his music,
As it thrilled the forest through.
So, la la la lalla.

Now my heart ne'er ceases longing,
For a lover proven false,
And the cruel haunting music
Still my restless soul entralls.
So la la, la lalla.

—*After Goethe.*

A Voice from the Sea.

The gaunt pines sway 'neath the north wind's wrath
And shrink from the roaring sea,
That writhes and twists on a rugged shore,
And mourns unceasingly.

From far on high mid the castle walls,
That look the north in the face,
A torch flames glaring and fitfully,
Braving the storm's wild pace.

And beside the flaming beacon
Sits a woman as carven stone;
She peers out into the darkness
And moans, "Thy will be done."

The Crusaders.

Sword, bright sword, scimitar blade of curvèd steel,
Thou 'fore the cross shall fail.

Woe to ye! sinister horsemen of the East,
Bend, ere our faith prevail.

O! thou desert's burning strand,
Flaming crescent's arid land,
Thou art but a grain of sand
In the hollow of God's hand.
God with us!

Far o'er the sea
Where Britain's white cliffs gleam,
Sing the lark and the robin
In cool meadows green.
Sweet-briar and thorn
Hear lover's vows at eve,
Ah, thou bonny England,
Hard wert thou to leave!

Onward still, though the heart be burned to dust,
On towards the holy grave.

Woe to ye! Saracen pagans of the East,
Bend thy souls to save.

O, thou desert's burning strand,
Flaming crescent's arid land,
Thou art but a grain of sand
In the hollow of God's hand.
God with us!

A Ballad of Charles the Bold.

Duke Charles rode forth at early dawn
Through drifting morning mists,
His armour frosted by the dew
Gleamed sullenly defiance.
Silently the Duke did ride
And idly clanked his sword,
But woe to him who caught his eye,
For Death led forth his charger.
All day long the battle raged.
And spirits mingled with the mist
That wreathed the warring knights:
Caressed the mailed heroes
And numbed their freezing wounds,
Till dull grey, stained with crimson,
Seemed flushed with tropic sunshine,
And Death lulled warm to rest.
But Charles, thou mighty Duke
That rodest forth at morn,
Ah! Charles, Death brought no peace to thee,
To thee who died that day,
For King Louis sits alone —
And counts thine all his very own:
And now he lords o'er Burgundy
And grips thy heart-strings yet,
Louis of France and Burgundy Rex,
King Louis reigns alone.
God rest thee, Charles.

Midsummer Clouds.

Through the clear meadow blue,
Wander fleecy white lambs,
And darker in shadow
The watch dog stands.

Far away towards the south
Gleams a city of domes,
A silent white city
Of snowy cones.

The flock wanders on,
And the sun sinks to bed,
The city is golden,
Now burning red.

And the light dies away
As the silent dim shapes
Sail on through the gloaming,
Towards dreamland's gates.

From A Wandering Iceberg.

An errant Princess of the North,
A virgin, snowy white,
Sails adown the Summer seas
To realms of burning light.

A. D. MDCXX.

The yellow setting sun
Melts the lazy sea of gold,
And gilds the swaying galleon,
That towards a land of promise
Lunges hugely on.

Starlight.

The stars are but the cherubs
That sing above the throne
Of gray old Ocean's spouse,
Fair Moon's pale majesty.

Song.

A merry song, a chorus brave,
And yet a sigh, regret,
For roses sweet in woodland lanes, —
Ah! love can ne'er forget!

In Mid-Ocean.

Inexorable!
Thou straight line of eternal fate
That ring'st the world,
Whilst on thy moaning breast
We play our puny parts,
And reckon us immortal.

Long Ago.

Long ago, sweetheart mine,
Roses bloomed as ne'er before,
Long ago the world was young
For us, sweetheart.

Fields of velvet, azure skies,
Whispering trees and murmuring streams,
Long ago Life spread his wings
For us, sweetheart.

And now that night is near,
Must God's harvest e'en be reaped,
Yet our love — our love shall live
For ay, sweetheart.

The Swan Bent Low.

The swan bent low to the lily
'Mid wavering shadows green,
And the songs he murmur'd softly,
Knowest thou what they mean?

I could tell thee truly,
But oh! I may not dare:
Look in my eyes and tell me
What said the lily fair?

A Maid Sings Light.

A maid sings light and a maid sings low,
With a merry laugh in her eyes of sloe,
I tell thee lad, have a care, nor dare,
Lest thou lose thy heart in the fair one's snare.

And doth she pout, and doth she sigh,
Ne'er go too close, nor dry her eye,
I tell thee lad, have a care, she's fair,
She'll surely laugh thy prayer to air.

For a maid loves light and a maid loves so,
That a merry merry laugh will answer thy woe,
I tell thee lad, have a care, nor dare,
Lest thou lose thy heart in the fair one's snare.

Norse Sonata.

A day of mighty deeds was past,
And through the night the north light stalked;
The wind made lonely moan.
The great rafters in the red-ribbed hall
Flashed crimson in the fitful flame
Of smouldering logs:
And from the stealthy shadows
That crept 'round Harold's throne,
Rang out a skald's strong voice
With tales of battles won;
Of Gudrun's love,
And Sigurd, Siegmund's son.

New England, A. D. 1899.

Old lilac bushes, thin and grey,
In wistful longing sigh,
Dishevelled roses blush in vain,
No mistress lingers nigh.

The tansy creeps e'en to the door
Through garden tangles sweet,
Gaunt, crabbed trees their wizen fruit
Strew at the master's feet.

And lo! a cricket bravely chirps
Within the lonely house:
But those who loved there long ago,
They sleep too deep to rouse.

But keep O keep your trust to heart,
'Twill never last now long:
For house and ye shall pass away,
Yea! even as my song.

Sunrise.

Sunrise gilds the crestèd sea
That mocks grim Oban's might,
But at his feet sways sullenly
A ship that died the night.

The Ocean's breast doth throb no more
For such a wreck as she,
The rocks gnaw at her broken heart,
The sun shines pitilessly.

A Spring Song.

A winsome morning measure
Trips merry maiden Spring,
O'er daffodils and daisies,
To crown the Summer, King.

And once the King is crowned,
And twilight 'gins to fall,
Brown Autumn slips the postern gate
At grim old Winter's call.

But soon the ruddy morning
With joyous songs shall ring.
The world will laugh a welcome
To merry maiden Spring.

Keltic Sonata.

Who minds now Keltic tales of yore.
Dark Druid rhymes that thrall,
Deirdrè's song, and wizard lore
Of great Cuchullin's fall.

Cuchullin.

Cuchullin fought and fought in vain,
'Gainst faery folk and Druid thrall;
And as the glowing sun swept down,
In royal robes, red gold besown,
With one last lingering glance,
He sate himself in lonely state
Against a giant monolith,
To wait death's wooing call.
None dared approach the silent shape
That froze to iron majesty,
Save the wan, mad daughters of old Night,
Blind wandering maidens of the mist,
Whose creeping fingers, cold and white,
Oft by the sluggard dead are kissed.
And yet the monstrous Thing held sway,
No living soul dared say it nay;
When lo! upon its shoulder still,
Unconscious of its potent will,
There perched a preening birdling gray,
A-weary of the dying day.
And all the watchers knew the lore;
Cuchullin was no more.

Where e'er Love be.

Where e'er Love be,
Tyrant he,
Without merci,
Plead as thou may, ma Mie,
He ne'er thy tears will see
Ah me, Ah me!

Light wings hath he
As any bee,
Let not him free,
For he alone, ma Mie,
Can rule the kingdom he
Hath won, Ah me.

Where e'er Love be,
Tyrant he,
Without merci.
But hold him close, ma Mie,
As bishop to his see,
For me — for me.

Fair Springtide.

Fair Springtide cometh once again,
To stir the sap in lonely trees,
To wake again the bitter joy
Of love that mortal eye ne'er sees.

Why waken those who sleep so sound?
Why cause again the tears to flow?
Ah Springtide! thou dost touch the quick
Of every creature here below.

Yet though the tears be bitter-sweet,
They come like soothing Summer rain.
And lo! the mournful desert heart
Grows green with love-lorn pain again.

To the Golden-rod.

A lissome maid with towseled hair
As soft as e'er a squirrel's vair,
With ne'er a care, all silky fair
She sways to every wooing air.

She flaunts her golden gown with grace,
And laughs in sturdy Autumn's face;
A ray of sunshine in the race,
That ends with hoary Winter's pace.

Within my heart O maiden fair,
No Winter's frown can e'er efface
Thy wayward grace so debonair,
Thou princess of a nomad race.

At Parting.

Unspoken words at parting
Find their voice in song,
Ah! sing them soft and tenderly,
The song will ne'er last long.

And hand grasps hand at parting,
Heart finds heart in song.
Unspoken love sing tenderly,
'Twill last as life is long.

An Old Garden.

Sweet-alyssum,
Moss grown stair,
Rows of roses,
Larkspur fair.

All old posies,
Tokens rare
Of love undying
Linger there.

Mid-Summer.

Droning Summer slumbers on
Midst drowsy murmurs sweet.
Above, the lazy cloudlets drift,
Below, the swaying wheat.

Mid-Winter.

In shrouded awe the world is wrapped,
The sullen wind doth groan,
'Neath winding-sheet the earth is stone,
The wraiths of snow have flown.

And lo! a thread of fate is snapped,
A breaking heart makes moan;
A virgin cold doth rule alone
From old Mid-winter's throne.

With Sweet Lavender.

From days of yore,
Of lover's lore,
A faded bow
Of one no more.

A treasured store
Of lover's lore,
Unmeasured woe
For one, no more.

In Deep Woods.

Above, long slender shafts of opal flame,
Below, the dim cathedral aisles ;
The mystery of immortal things
Broods o'er the woods at eve.

Indian Idyl.

Alone by the wayward flame
She weaves broad wampum skeins
While afar through the summer night
Sigh the wooing flutes' soft strains.

To an Old White Pine.

A giant of an ancient race
He stands, a stubborn sentinel
O'er swaying, gentle forest trees
That whisper at his feet.

From a Log Cabin.

A house of dreams untold,
It looks out over the whispering tree-tops
And faces the setting sun.

The Joy of Autumn.

From hill-top to vale,
Through meadow and dale,
Young Autumn doth wake the world;
And naught shall avail,
But our souls shall sail
With the flag of life unfurled.

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